

This Collection of Thoughts was an exercise I gave myself to think more about ritual as method, for the research project I am currently working on. I challenged myself to a mini-ritual of taking two pictures of the cherry tree in the garden, and also spending 5 minutes sensing its surroundings, once a day. This ritual lasted three days. I learn and remember by re-doing, so in this case, it was while re-drawing these pictures that the thoughts came to mind and I wrote them down then and there. They are in effect, part of a whole. They function fine as separate paragraphs, but they also make more sense together.

More thoughts will probably be added to this collection.

Collection of Thoughts as a result of a mini test-ritual of taking two pictures of the cherry tree in my garden once a day and spending 5 minutes sensing its surroundings

If ritual were my method what does it entail ? An action: taking a picture of the cherry tree, then spending time sensing the surroundings. In time: taking a picture once a day, sensing the surroundings for a period of 5 mins. What makes this a ritual? The grounding during the sensing period, ie taking time and being aware of the surroundings through my senses: i saw the leaves blowing off the branches, I felt the wind on my face, I heard the sound of the wind and the leaves rustling and the birds, I smelled the slightly mouldy smell of decay from the leaves. I didn't taste anything though. And I felt the wind more strongly on tuesday. And I also spoke a bit out loud and in my head: 'oh you have lichen growing on these lower branches here, I haven't noticed it before, have you had it for a while I wonder?' or 'I wonder what the wind feels like for you, on your bark and branches, making you move like that?'. I also felt my brain switch off a bit, at least on the Monday when I first did the ritual. There was literally nothing in my brain, pitch black. Bliss. Not so the other days, then I started thinking and speaking out loud. Your thoughts are like a bus and you're at the bus stop. Either you choose to climb onto the bus or let it pass, said Inkeri. For now, just let it pass. Oh but the leaves are flying away so fast, and there are more yellow leaves on the ground at your feet then there were yesterday look!

Rituals make life last in time through this grounding process. Rituals allow us to become with the world through time. A way of grounding us in relation to our surroundings. Making us AWARE. It is through this repetition, this repeated sameness of events, that rituals stabilize life and by extension our perception of the world, allowing us humans to become-with our

environment (whether that is our physical natural environment of more-than-humans of forests, seas, skies, soil and all that it includes) or our inner forest of thoughts and memories, of the different perspectives born out of the complexities of this world). In this exercise, the repeated sameness was taking the picture and spending 5 mins sensing the world. If I did this on a regular basis, maybe my perception of the world, human and non-human, would be Affected by it. I would become-with.

The grounding and the action and the time is determined by the ritual itself. So a letter-writing workshop would have different grounding, action and time parameters than this ritual. Rituals create or reinforce communities. If I carried on doing this tree-ritual, my community would be the tree, the leaves, the wind, the birds, and the list goes on... Rituals done together with other humans reinforce communities, as also seen in religion. BCH mentions the religion of Christianity where ritual festivals are key narrative moments within an overall narrative which provides meaning and orientation. In this way there is a sense to time, and to Christian life.

Also, maybe the site is important too (duh!). Taking a picture from the same place, and spending time for grounding in the same place everytime, must be included in the ritual parameters. Again, borrowing from religion, site is what connects pilgrims to each other, everyone is in the temple together. Almost as if the site has a 'power to gather'. (re: forest library as a site in 'forest library collection of thoughts').

And where should it happen? A quiet space. And safe, where it's ok to be vulnerable. We should almost be able to put up some things to make the space, a bit like a movable set, where each element is a prop in the ritual.

What is the grounding and the action and the time and the site of a letter-writing ritual? And why there, why that? The action in this ritual is writing the letter to the past from today, and the other letter to the past from the future. And then the other ritual action is to discuss. The grounding

is... taking five minutes before each letter to empty your brain? Close your eyes and feel the paper, and the pen and pay attention to the sounds around, and the smells, and how you're feeling right now. I don't want to do another mindfulness workshop (as Eline rightly pointed out). But it feels like sensing has to do with grounding. What is the grounding action here, the one that makes one aware (the 5 minutes sensing the wind and the birds and the sounds and the leaves)? How often should a letter-writing ritual happen? And when should it happen? Solstices? There's a grounding there, connecting generations while also connecting to the cycles of time of the ground under our feet. Something about this that I can't put my finger on yet.

Maybe the grounding is a phrase or a sound that is repeated everytime to open and close the ritual (like Yekrik! Yekrak! in storytelling). These ritual formulas open to other worlds. The repetition of the phrase and at that specific time, can act as the grounding moment. Almost like the in-between space, liminality, threshold, of the ritual. BCH: 'thresholds, as transitions, give a rhythm to, articulate, and even narrate space and time (...) Thresholds speak, thresholds transform. Beyond a threshold there is what is other, what is foreign.' when one participates in a ritual, one goes from a state of being to another state of being, because of taking part in the action of the ritual.

And what is the grounding and the action and the time and the site of a collaborative reading group ritual?